

# SC PROJECT LEARNING TREE

## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



PROJECT  
LEARNING  
TREE®  
SOUTH CAROLINA

PLT is an initiative of SFI Inc.





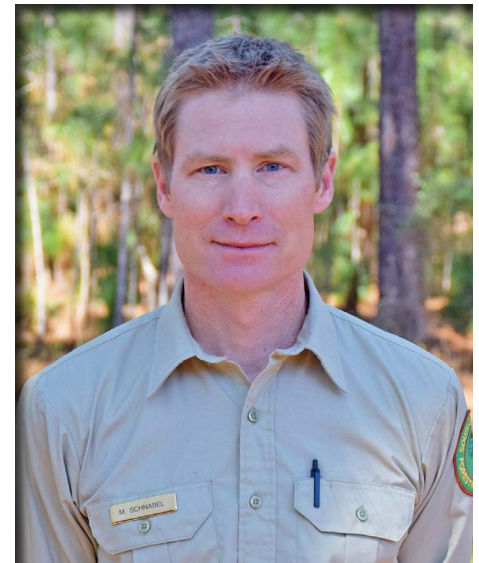
# COORDINATOR'S CORNER

In 2022, the SC PLT program was back in full swing after the end of most in-person meeting restrictions, the introduction of another new curriculum, the creation of new educator resources, the training of a new special group of early childhood PLT facilitators (volunteers who lead PLT professional development (PD) events), and the formation of new virtual and in-person professional learning and networking opportunities for facilitators.

With the release of PLT's new early childhood activity guide, *Trees & Me: Activities for Exploring Nature with Young Children*, facilitators needed to become comfortable with the guide and be trained in how to lead PD events for educators on the guide. This was accomplished at our annual summer Facilitator Refresher events, one online and the other in-person at Meetze Farms in Newberry. Mike Meetze (2013 SC Tree Farmer of the Year) generously hosted the event in his renovated barn, which is made from lumber he milled from his own property. He gave the facilitators a tour of Meetze Farms and taught them how he sustainably manages his property for timber production, recreation, carbon sequestration, aesthetics and many other environmental benefits. Much learning, fun, food and fellowship was had on this day!

Our active facilitators are the backbone of the program and are the key to its success. Twenty-four facilitators and five facilitators-in-training (FIT) led 37 separate PD events across the state to train 505 new PLT educators. Many thanks to all the facilitators that led PD events this year! The SC PLT Facilitator Rewards Program recognizes

active facilitators for their hard work leading PD events and promoting the PLT program. Facilitators earn points by facilitating PD events, helping at conferences, being the coordinator at a partner SC PLT Environmental Education Center, or leading "teaser" presentations. Rewards range from gift certificates to an all-expense paid trip to the national PLT Conference. This year the facilitators that were the most active were Lynn Hoekstra (Columbia International University), Sara Beth Freytag (Hobcaw Barony Discovery



Matt Schnabel, SC PLT Coordinator

Center), Tia Prostko (SC Program for Infant/Toddler Care), and Thea Hagan (Clemson University Forestry Department). Thanks goes to all our facilitators for their dedication to the SC PLT program!

PLT's alignment to standards has been a logical reason for in-service teachers to incorporate our activities into their units of study and for school districts to allow facilitators to lead PD events at district in-service days. Through the support of a Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Education Grant, the learning objectives



Columbia International University early childhood education majors display their "Shape of Things" project during a *Trees & Me* PD event

from the activities in the new Trees & Me guide were correlated, and reverse-correlated to the most recent version of the SC Early Learning Standards. These standards describe expectations for what children will learn, from infancy through kindergarten entry. Many thanks to Facilitator Tia Prostko (SC Program for Infant/Toddler Care) for her work on the correlations which are posted on the SC PLT website ([www.scfc.gov/education/project-learning-tree/](http://www.scfc.gov/education/project-learning-tree/)).

SC Project Learning Tree offers professional development in in-person, blended (virtual & in-person), and virtual formats. Our state program currently has grant funding to offer trainings -free of charge- to pre-service educators studying education, students majoring in natural resources, in-service educators, and early childhood educators registered through the SC



Participants study soil quality for the activity Monitoring Forest Health in a Focus on Forests PD event.

Department of Social Services. In 2022, SC PLT received grant funding specifically for this purpose through the SFI Education and the International Paper Foundation grant programs... thanks!

Thank you to all of you who have supported SC PLT with your time,

money (thank you Georgia-Pacific, Rayonier, Palmetto Agribusiness Council, SC Biomass Council, SC Tree Farm, and SC SFI Implementation Committee for general fund donations), and skills and I ask for your continued support...WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!!!

## ASSISTANT COORDINATOR'S CORNER

This year, we were ecstatic to develop a new partnership with two very important early childhood organizations – SC Department of Social Services (DSS) ABC Quality program and SC Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R). SC PLT held a special facilitator training in the Trees & Me activity guide allowing ABC Quality and CCR&R staff to now offer PLT educator trainings to their early childhood networks. ABC Quality is South Carolina's statewide rating and improvement system for childcare and early education. CCR&R promotes high-quality early care and education by providing free, statewide services to South Carolina's families, early childhood programs, and communities.

The Trees & Me activity guide includes 12 activities and more than

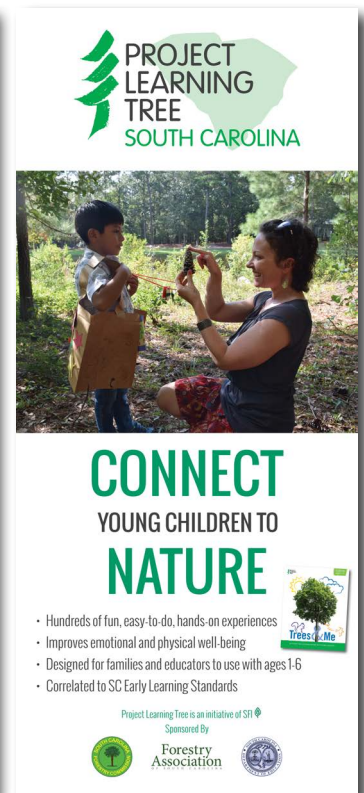
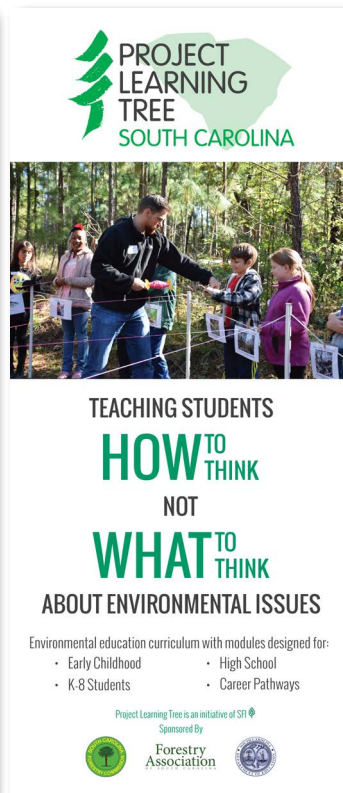
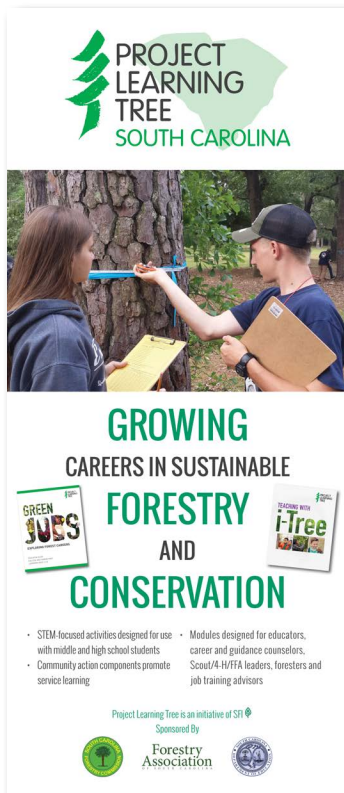
250 learning experiences for families and teachers to connect children ages 1–6 to nature, with a focus on trees. Twenty-three staff attended this one-day training at Harbison State Forest on May 26, 2022. Matt Schnabel and I led this training along with Facilitator Tia Prostko. Facilitators got to participate in and lead several experiences from the activity guide, learn about our state program and how to lead PLT PD events, as well as develop their own sample agendas and collaborate with other trainers. All 23 staff are considered trainers with SC Endeavors, so they can now offer Trees & Me trainings as an approved course, allowing early childcare providers that are registered with DSS, to receive their required registry renewal credits. SC Endeavors is the professional development system for South



Beth Foley, SC Assistant PLT Coordinator

Carolina's early childhood workforce. Our new facilitators have already led and assisted with several trainings in 2022, as well as presented and tabled at early childhood conferences. This has already proved to be a great partnership and will significantly broaden our outreach with the early





childhood community in our state!

SC PLT's Marketing Subcommittee has been instrumental in assisting with the development of several new SC PLT outreach materials over the past year. Matt and I worked with the subcommittee to make recommendations and review the new designs for SC PLT's informational brochure and four pop-up banners. The PLT brochures we have historically used were created by National PLT and have been out of print for the past few years. There was a major need for a new brochure, and developing one allowed us to include local photos and information about our state program. Our PLT pop-up banners were dated with old PLT logos, graphics, and featured outdated activity guides. We now have four new much-needed banners – Trees & Me, Explore Your Environment K-8, Growing Careers in Forestry (Green Jobs and i-Tree), and a general PLT banner.

The SC PLT Environmental

Education (EE) Centers have continued to offer free open-to-the-public annual trainings in thanks to grant funding. The 2022 SFI Education Grant supported these educator professional development events this year, and we hope to receive

funding to continue this effort next year. We also received \$2,500 from the Rayonier Community Fund to go towards new materials for the Tree Trunks that are located at each of the seven centers. There are big revisions to the Tree Trunks coming next year!

## How do you spell success?

- 23,579 SC educators trained in 1,159 workshops since 1980;
- Trained and certified a special group of Facilitators from SC Department of Social Services ABC Quality and SC Child Care Resource & Referral programs to lead PLT training events for early childhood professionals;
- Conducted 3 PLT Facilitator training events for 41 people on PLT's newest curriculum Trees & Me: Activities for Exploring Nature with Young Children;
- Awarded \$20,000 in grant funding to support program expenses for 2022 and 2023.



## About SC Project Learning Tree

Project Learning Tree is the environmental education program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and sponsored in South Carolina by the S.C. Forestry Commission, the State Department of Education, and the S.C. Forestry Foundation [a 509 (a) (3) non-profit organization].





## Diane Curlee Named Outstanding Educator of the Year

Diane Curlee of Neeses has been named the 2022 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee.

Curlee serves as the education coordinator for the Orangeburg County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD).

“The huge strength of the PLT curriculum is that participants learn how to think, not what to think, by participating in the activities,” said Curlee. “PLT allows for discovery of knowledge; that is what makes the use of the PLT curriculum awesome.”

Curlee’s first experience with PLT was in 1992 while she was teaching high school science at Bowman Academy in Bowman, S.C. Coincidentally, the workshop that introduced PLT to her was part of a two-week workshop sponsored by the Orangeburg County SWCD, where she became the part-time education coordinator in 1999 and transitioned into a full-time role there in 2000.

During her time with Orangeburg County SCWD, Curlee has used PLT curriculum in workshops, camps and classes. She has sent notifications to other educators to alert them about upcoming PLT trainings in the area. She has also promoted PLT in workshops by using PLT lessons in trainings and uses PLT materials to teach children about the forest, particularly “We All Need Trees.” Gabby Greenleaves, a tree costume purchased through a forestry grant more than two decades ago, has also become well known in Orangeburg Country for being used along with PLT

in programs for Arbor Day and Earth Day.

Curlee’s work with the Orangeburg County SCWD hasn’t gone unnoticed, as it received the South Carolina Association of Conservation Districts Outstanding District award in 2010 in recognition of the environmental education programs presented by the district.

Curlee has also completed Habitat Steward training by the SC Wildlife Federation, Project WET facilitator training, Sandhills Master Naturalist training and is a certified SC Adopt-A-Stream volunteer. She is the education collaborator with SI Group in Orangeburg, consulting with them on the “Hundred Acre Wood” buffer, which is a certified Corporate Lands for Learning by the Wildlife Habitat Council. She is also the awards and nominations chair for the Environmental Education Association of SC and the Edisto-Savannah Area representative and chair of the benevolence and scholarship committees.



## 2022 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

In 2022, 37 face-to-face and virtual professional development (PD) events were conducted with 505 participants. With three PD events covering more than one module, a total of 537 copies of the PLT modules were distributed at these PD events. The following is a breakdown of the types of PD events:

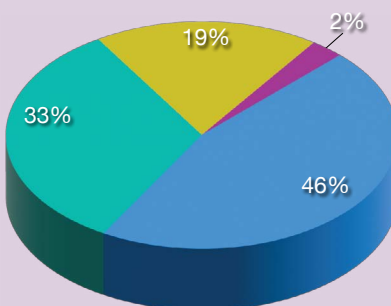
Type Of PD event	# Of PD events*	% Of PD events	# Of Participants	% Of Total Participants
Early Childhood	11	28	155	29
Pre-service Early Childhood	5	13	86	16
K-8	9	23	115	21
Pre-service K-8	11	28	137	26
All Secondary modules	4	10	44	8
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>N/A</b>

\* In order to show how many of each PLT module were distributed and how many PD events were conducted for each module, PD events that covered more than one module are shown as separate workshops for each module, making the total number of PD events 40.

## 2022 SC PLT BUDGET SUMMARY

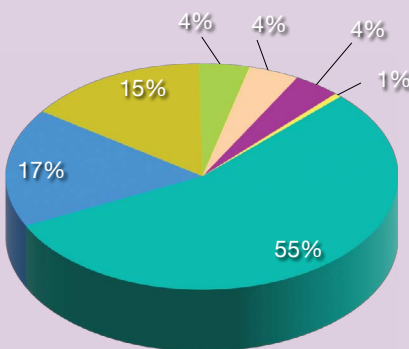
### Income: \$61,059.86

Grants	\$28,000.00
Cash Balance	\$20,006.37
Corporate Donations	\$11,484.90
Workshop Fees	\$1,568.59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$61,059.86</b>



### Expenses: \$22,760.11

Grant Expenditures	\$12,594.72
Travel	\$3,853.67
Publicity	\$3,442.48
Awards and Certificates	\$947.05
Activity Guides	\$940.00
Workshop Expenses	\$859.06
Operating Expenses	\$123.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$22,760.11</b>



### Facilitator & Steering Committee In-Kind Contributions: \$24,985.96

## FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Georgi-Pacific LLC  
International Paper  
Palmetto Agribusiness Council  
Rayonier Community Fund

SC Biomass Council  
SC SFI State Implementation Committee  
SC Tree Farm Committee  
Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc.

## 2022 PD EVENT FACILITATORS

Cassie Bell	Jennifer Majors
Madeline Bertauski*	Sharon Miller
Dodie Clark	Keisha Pearson*
Elizabeth Crow	Deborah Poston
Linda Doherty	Tia Prostko
Darlene Faucette	Taylor Rowe
Kimberly Fickling	Sarah Rubin*
Sara Beth Freytag	Kit Saiz De La Mora
Thea Hagan	Tonya Smith
Lynn Hoekstra	Janet Steele
Sarah Howard*	Crystal Strickland*
Russell Hubright	Tanya Towne
Rachel Kennerly	Patricia Whitener
Sherry Ly Ching Chen King	Rosemary Wicker
Christine Lotter	*Facilitator in training

### 2022 Facilitators Who Volunteered in Other Ways

Diane Curlee	Ian Reeve
Robert Carter	Tenesha Slempa
Chanda Cooper	Darene Weatherlow*
Holly DeVault	Carrie Whitlock
Lynn Pilewski	*Facilitator in training

## PLT STEERING COMMITTEE

### Executive Officers

- Sarah Talley, Chair  
*U.S. Forest Service*
- Tanya Towne, Vice Chair  
*Laurens County School District 55*
- Robert Carter, Secretary  
*Bethelwoods Camp & Conference Center*
- Emily Oakman, Treasurer  
*Forestry Association of SC*
- Matt Schnabel, Coordinator  
*SC Forestry Commission*

### Members

- Barbara Allen  
*Santee Cooper (retired)*
- Philip Arnold  
*International Paper*
- Dodie Clark  
*Anderson County Library System*
- Chanda Cooper  
*Richland County Conservation Department*
- Cynthia Deaton  
*Clemson University*
- Linda Doherty  
*SC Child Care Resource & Referral*
- Beth Foley  
*SC Forestry Commission*
- Troy Helms  
*Clemson Extension-SC Agricultural Education*
- Russell Hubright  
*SC Forestry Commission*
- Linda Sinclair  
*SC Department of Education (retired)*
- Amy Umberger  
*Lexington/Richland District 5*
- Michael Walker  
*International Paper*
- Rosemary Wicker  
*University of SC (retired)*
- Lark Widener  
*SC Department of Education*



# 2022 Facilitator Refresher at Meetze Farms



Elizabeth Crow with Florence-Darlington Technical College sorts tree seeds and cones based on their texture.



Mike Meetze demonstrates the use of his Wood Mizer portable sawmill.



Facilitators experiment with textured paint using crushed leaves, sawdust and coffee grounds.



Meetze showed several stands on his property and talked about his use of prescribed fire as a management tool.



Sara Beth Freytag from Hobcaw Barony describes what she feels in the mystery box.



# What They're Saying About SC PLT PD Events...

This was an absolutely wonderful training! The staff are so excited to take this back and use it in their classrooms. Thank you!

**Jenny Thompson**  
STEM Director  
Ben Lippen School

Great program! So excited to partner with PLT!! We Girl Scout leaders need all the help we can get.

**Stephanie T. Senn**  
Girl Scouts Mountains  
to Midlands

This was extremely fun. I learned a lot, and it was great to learn from our hosts.

**Sarah Rubin**  
Greenville Zoo

I love how versatile the programs are. We were all coming up with ways to adapt the programs we practiced in the session.

**Annie Boyd**  
Beaufort Conservation District

The training was much needed. We have gone to conferences with session breakouts for outdoor learning but really didn't go into "how it looks" in Early Head Start. Beth & Matt gave excellent examples and provided the information in a way to reach all learning ages 1-6 years.

**Participant**

Vital Connections Early Head Start of the Midlands

